

Montana Prevention Coalition Communication Post

September 2015



PFS COMMUNITY ORGANIZING – MY EXPERIENCE WITH THE POWELL COUNTY FAIR BOARD

The key informant interviews and community readiness assessment I did for Powell County revealed the apprehensions of several key community leaders. They expressed concern that perhaps we had an open container policy that wasn't being enforced. This appeared to be especially the case during the week of the fair including the street dance. I also heard about the troubling beer garden that was set up for the demolition derby on the last night of the fair that many teens attended.

I went to a fair board meeting to join in the planning process and it was clear that I was a "newcomer" and needed to earn my way. After four months, I volunteered to be their parade coordinator. I thought this might be an opportunity to approach the problem from a different angle. In my new roll, I gathered research on parades and developed a strategy plan which I brought to the next meeting. Taking on this new role was a challenging learning process but in the end I was offered a free prevention booth. I was also able to pass out 100 donated bags with a "Too Smart to Start" and "101 things to do instead of using drugs, alcohol or tobacco" messages. *(Continued on page 2)*

Hashtags in the 406—A Look at Social Media in Montana Prevention

Hashtag? Huh? What's a hashtag? It looks like a pound sign? #? Like that? For many of us working in prevention, we know staying current is part of our job. We need to know current drug trends, current social trends, and use current data in our prevention plans. We can't combat 2015 drinking and driving issues with 1970's data. It's just as important that we are using current technology and are social media savvy when working in prevention. Especially in Montana.

I am the prevention specialist for 11 counties, two of which include Yellowstone County, the most populated, urban county in the state at 155,634 people and Petroleum County, the least populated, rural county with a population of 485. Needless to say, I am stretched rather thin and have to be creative in how I can educate and meet the needs of each county.

Yellowstone County is very prevention minded. Years of hard work and partnerships have paid off. We currently have a Multi-Jurisdictional Alcohol Enforcement Team that conducts over 250+ compliance checks per year. The team worked hard to pass a social host ordinance in 2010 within Billings city limits and its members help teach the *Let's Control It!* classes. We have worked hard to keep our coalition expanding and sustained by combining forces with the DUI Task Force. We brought in two major hospitals and two universities to sit on the task force. We contribute over \$40,000 a year to prevention activities, most of which are using environmental strategies. This summer we headed up a \$20,000 anti-drinking and driving media campaign. *(Continued on page 2)*

The Partnership for Success Evaluation Process

Now that you've met the Partnership for Success Evaluation Team in the previous newsletter, you may be wondering what the evaluation is all about. Our role as evaluators is to tell the story of what is happening around the state. In more practical terms, the evaluation process is designed to help determine whether the Montana PFS Project is achieving its intended goals, objectives, and outcomes, and whether adjustments need to be made. The purpose of the evaluation is not to *prove* or *disprove*, but to *improve*.

Sometimes evaluation gets confused as research or contract monitoring. To help you understand the evaluator's role with the PFS, let's use a puzzle as an analogy. Each of the communities provides information such as data workbooks and plans to BAMS, the evaluation team, and DPHHS. Think of those as puzzle pieces. To evaluate the Project, the evaluators put together all of the puzzle pieces, creating one big Montana PFS puzzle. As the evaluators, we do not look at the puzzle pieces to see what they are made of or if they are the right shape or have the right number of sides. We just put all of the pieces together as best we can to provide the full picture of prevention activities in the state.

Our first evaluation report is due the end of October, and will identify the baseline data for the project. This report will set the stage for where things are at the beginning of the project. Each annual report after this one will show if and how things have changed.

Kelly Hart, MHP, CPH
Hart of Montana Consulting, Inc.

(Powell County continued)

I arranged to have volunteers hand out the bags to local businesses and to children along the parade route so they could use them to collect candy from the floats. I received a lot of positive feedback for organizing and running the parade and feel entirely welcomed by the fair board now.

Throughout these efforts I was able to raise awareness of underage drinking and recruit collaborators in the community including the owner of a local radio station. He is interested in helping me spread the message targeting my identified risk factors with a coordinated public awareness campaign. Persistence, adaptability, and seizing on a challenging but ultimately rewarding opportunity helped me make positive inroads in Powell County. Even though I have not made progress on the open container policy, I feel like I have a better opportunity next year.

By Amanda Bohrer, PFS Prevention Specialist for Powell County

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In May, we started a Facebook page. Sounds great right? It is! We have worked so hard to get here and are working harder to keep it going. I can't say we have seen the same success in my other ten counties, but like many other prevention specialists, you learn to be adaptable and help out as much as you can with what you have. How can I be in all these places and have a prevention presence? Yellowstone County has numerous resources, law enforcement personnel, schools, and data sources. The other counties do not. Some are urban and some are rural. How can you educate a parent about underage drinking in Yellowstone County and Petroleum County with the same message? It's all about likes, comments, and the hashtag. Welcome to social media.

If your coalition or organization doesn't have at least a Facebook page, I recommend you start one. If you need help setting one up, you can find step-by-step instructions online or you can always ask your friends, children, or colleagues for help. It's important to familiarize yourself with how Facebook works. There are also webinars focusing on using social media and prevention. Twitter, Snap Chat, Pinterest, and Instagram are other social media sites, but for the purpose of this article, I will just be talking about Facebook, specifically our local coalition's Facebook page that I help run. All social media sites and apps are readily available through smartphones, iPods, iPads, Kindles, and android devices. And they are free to download and access.

The Greater Montana Foundation lists the following stats from a recent Montana survey:

- ♦ 62% of Montanans use social media
- ♦ 76% of men age 18 – 49 are daily users of social media
- ♦ 75% of women age 18 – 49 are daily users of social media
- ♦ Facebook is the most-used social media network in Montana at 59%
- ♦ 34% of Montanans use social media to access news and information
- ♦ Women age 18 – 49 access news on social media more than any other demographic.

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We can learn to use social media to our advantage. We can potentially reach 62% of the population of Montana from our smart phones. I have posted articles on local prevention activities, national events, local data and compliance checks results. These posts will show up in the news feeds of whoever has liked us on Facebook. Whether that be a mom in Bridger Montana or a college freshman in Billings. The best tool on Facebook is called the “Insights”.

This evaluation tool tells me the number of people who view my post, how many of them engaged in the post and the age, gender, and location of the page’s followers. I know that 63% of our followers are female and that 44% of them are between the ages of 25 and 44. I know that only 8% of our page’s followers are college-aged and that we have zero high school or Jr. high-aged followers. That tells me that we have not appealed and or marketed ourselves to that age demographic. Our coalition needs to reach out to that age demographic. How? We are looking into making a separate Facebook page that appeals specifically to the 13 to 18 year-olds with hashtag campaigns and covering teen events such as prom, homecoming and school competitions. If the selfie has taught us anything, it’s that teens love seeing themselves represented on social media. We are also going to conduct focus groups and start a profile on Instagram or Twitter. Why? Because social media trends are showing that more teens are using these sites right now because their parents and grandparents are not.

Remember that demographic I talked about? Most of Montana social media users and our followers are women aged 25-44. But we can use this to our advantage too, by sharing as much parent specific information as we can. While it is important to market yourselves and get as many followers as possible to reach as many people, you can also tailor your message to your audience. Facebook also has a paid option and for a small fee, your message will show up as a “sponsored” post. Facebook allows you to pick the location of Facebook users you want your message to be seen by. For example, I can pick within five or 100 miles of my current location. And then my message will show up in the newsfeeds of people within five miles of my location whether they have “liked” us or not. Powerful, isn’t it?

I have found that even though some of my counties are as different as night and day, they all know what social media is. They all have access to it. Now it’s my job to use that as a tool to reach as many people as I can. Media campaigns used to be about billboards and radio and TV spots that were expensive and had little evaluation. Now, it’s about the power of a hashtag. I can post a picture of two Billings Police Officers’ conducting a DUI stop on a Saturday night and label it- #KeepingYouSafe #SaturdayNight #ThePartyIsOver and anyone who searches these hashtags are going to see this post. I don’t always understand the appeal of it and I am still learning, but I see the value in understanding how social media is used and how many people it can reach in a short amount of time.

With social media, we have the ability to connect people with prevention information and educate the public on why compliance checks and social host laws are important without scheduling airtime on TV or doing an interview with the Billings Gazette. I myself follow pages such as SAMHSA and NIDA. Every day I have access to awesome articles and data that I can use in my counties or share it on our Facebook page. It can take me 10 minutes to research a post, share it, and within two hours, 100 people have seen it. Think about how social media can work for you and in your counties. How can you reach the teens or the parents with a specific message or a broad prevention message? For some coalitions, it may be about reaching the voters and talking about policy changes.

It’s also important to know what the most popular Facebook pages are in your area. Meaning, who has the most “likes” or “followers.” In Billings, it is the newspaper, TV stations, hospitals, and colleges. If you can collaborate and work together with these organizations to share prevention information to their followers, imagine the amount of people you can reach. For example, October is Prevention Month. Do your local TV stations and hospitals know this? Are they doing anything special? How about meeting with them and putting together a weekly prevention message they can share to their followers. It makes them look caring and proactive in the community, and you have just inadvertently educated 5,000 people on issues such as underage drinking or prescription drug abuse. It may take some time and trial and error, but I think you will begin to see just how powerful social media is and how we can use it in prevention in Montana.

Sara Mahoney
Prevention Specialist
Mental Health Center
Billings, Montana #59103